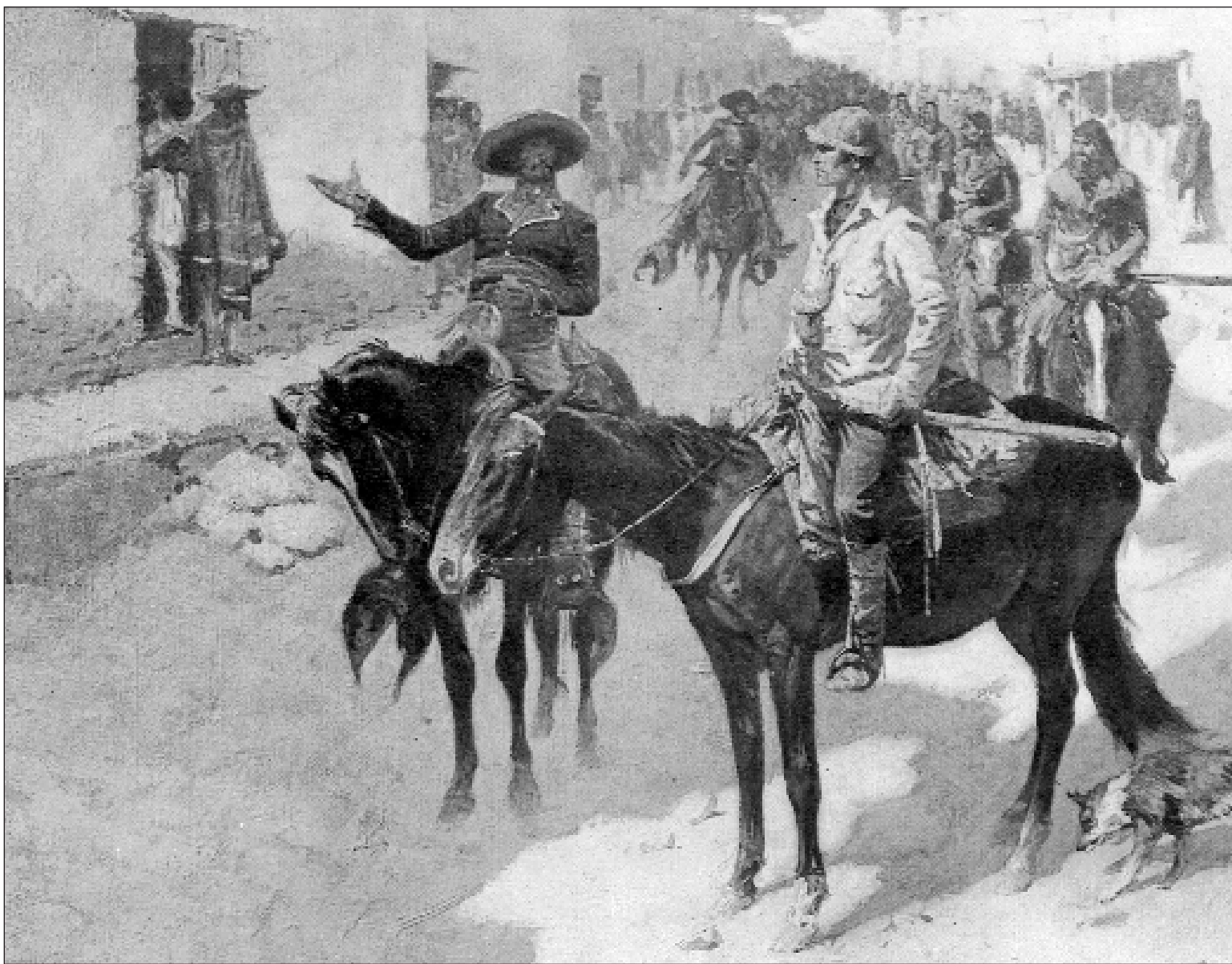

ENEMIES AND FRIENDS

by Leo E. Oliva



Zebulon Pike entering Santa Fe, March 2, 1806. From a painting by Frederic Remington.

Zebulon Montgomery Pike and Facundo Melgares in the Competition for the Great Plains, 1806–1807



The story of Lieutenant/Captain¹ Zebulon Montgomery Pike's expedition across the Great Plains to the Rocky Mountains (1806–1807), even compared with the much more famous Corps of Discovery led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark (1804–1806), is an outstanding record of exploration for the United States through a portion of the Louisiana Purchase. Pike helped the young nation later claim and eventually fulfill that claim to the Southwest (including Kansas and all or portions of eight other states). Just as remarkable and much less known and understood is the expedition of Lieutenant Facundo Melgares and his Spanish troops from New Mexico to the Great Plains just prior to Pike's venture. Pike became aware of the Spanish mission to the Great Plains when he arrived at the Pawnee village on the Republican River in present Nebraska, where Melgares had visited a few weeks earlier. Pike's party followed the return route of Melgares south to the Arkansas River and along that stream into present Colorado to the point where the Spaniards left that river to head back to Santa Fe. It is interesting that almost everything known about Melgares's 1806 trip comes from Pike's journal, for the records of that Spanish expedition have not been found (it is possible they were destroyed by a fire at the archives in Chihuahua City).

The tale of these two expeditions and their respective leaders became more intertwined after the capture of Lieutenant Pike's exploring party near the Rio Grande in present southern Colorado and his detention in Santa Fe and Chihuahua, during a portion of which time Lieutenant Melgares was Pike's guard, overseer, and guide. The two enemies, for such they were as military officers of competing nations at a time when Spain and the United States feared war between them might break out any time, became friends. Pike learned much about the Great Plains and the provinces of northern New Spain from Mel-

Leo E. Oliva, a former university professor, is editor and publisher of the *Santa Fe Trail Association quarterly*, *Wagon Tracks*, and serves on the *Zebulon Pike Bicentennial Commission*.

1. Pike, First U.S. Infantry, was promoted from lieutenant to captain during his expedition, effective August 12, 1806. Because he did not learn of it until his return to the United States the following year, he was referred to as Lieutenant Pike during his entire expedition. To avoid confusion, that rank will be used throughout this article, although he officially was Captain Pike before he arrived in present Kansas.

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gares, and that information along with Pike's own astute observations of the people and culture of the region, published in his journal of the expedition in 1810, sparked increased interest in the United States to attempt to open trade with New Mexico. Spain thwarted those trading efforts as long as it retained control of the colony of New Spain (later Mexico) but following Mexican independence from Spanish rule in 1821 both the United States and northern Mexico realized fruitful economic results. It is safe to declare that everyone who ventured forth from the United States to establish contact with northern Mexico after 1811 benefited either directly or indirectly from Pike's expedition and journal (including information provided by Melgares). Facundo Melgares, governor of New Mexico from 1818 to 1822, welcomed the first successful U.S. trade expedition to Santa Fe in 1821.

Their respective governments sent both Pike and Melgares with a major purpose of securing friendship, trade relations, and alliances with several Indian tribes of the region, including the Osages, Kansas, Pawnees, and Comanches. The United States especially directed Pike to open talks with the leaders of the Comanche tribe because of the tribe's close ties to New Spain. The policy of seeking Indian spheres of influence was not new and had been used by all nations involved in the contest for North America. The governments considered Indian allies to be the key element to establish effective control and eventual domination of a vast region, including present Kansas.

France, which initially was most successful in developing alliances with the Indians of the region (except for the Comanches who remained in the Spanish sphere of influence), was eliminated as a contender for control of North America at the close of the French and Indian War (Seven Years' War in Europe) concluded by the 1762 Treaty of Paris.² Both Britain and Spain competed for favors with the tribes, and the new United States entered the contest after winning independence from Britain by the 1783 Treaty of Paris. England continued to trade with the Plains Indians, but the main contest, after the sale of Louisiana Territory to the United States in 1803, was between the

United States and Spain. Immediately the United States increased efforts to establish, gain, and consolidate control over the trade with these various tribes (many of whom were traditional enemies), thereby hoping to establish domination of the tribes and the lands they occupied. On the opposing side, Spain pursued trade and alliances with Plains tribes and attempted to use them against the United States.³

A critical issue in this pursuit of control was the establishment of the boundaries of the Louisiana Purchase. Spain refused to recognize the sale of Louisiana to the United States by France, claimed almost everything west of the Mississippi River, and prohibited U.S. citizens from entering the territory. The United States wished to push that boundary as far west as it could, certainly to the Rocky Mountains and, if possible, all the way to the Rio Grande in the Southwest and the Pacific Ocean in the Northwest. The boundary issue remained unsettled until the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, also known as the Transcontinental Treaty.⁴ For all these reasons the expeditions led by Melgares and Pike comprised an important round of an expanded contest for a huge portion of North America between those two nations. The United States quickly won the contest, thanks especially to Lieutenant Pike but also to Napoleon Bonaparte who sold Louisiana to the United States and, perhaps more important, occupied Spain from 1808 to 1814, during and after which the Spanish empire in the New World fell into rapid decline.⁵

Although they never encountered each other on the Plains, the paths of Melgares and Pike met up at the village of the Pawnees on the Republican River in present southern Nebraska. Their respective relations with the Indians of the region compose part of this story, along with a brief summary of the two expeditions and the later friendship of these two army officers, which had several ramifications.

Additional background will help readers understand the importance of the Melgares and Pike expeditions and what was at stake on the Great Plains. It provides insight into apprehensions the Spanish

2. Donald A. Nuttall, "The American Threat to New Mexico, 1804–1821" (master's thesis, San Diego State College, 1959), 17; see also Henry Folmer, *Franco-Spanish Rivalry in North America, 1524–1763* (Glen-dale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1953); Abraham P. Nasatir, ed., *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785–1804*, 2 vols. (1952; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

3. See Abraham P. Nasatir, *Borderland in Retreat: From Louisiana to the Far Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976); Charles L. Kenner, *A History of New Mexican–Plains Indian Relations* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), 66–68.

4. Nasatir, *Borderland in Retreat*, 136–37.

5. Warren L. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire: Spain and the Pacific Northwest, 1543–1819* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 450, 491, 516.

held about Pike and other U.S. explorers as well as what the United States hoped to achieve in the American West. Although Spain's Francisco Vázquez de Coronado was the first European to explore the Great Plains, including portions of Kansas, Spain was not a major contender in the contest for this region during the era of European colonial

trade arrangements with many tribes, including the Osages, Kansas, Pawnees, and others. They could not, however, win over the Comanches, with whom, after 1786, Spain held dominion.⁶

Spain continued to consider New Mexico and lands to the north and east as a buffer zone where foreign threats



Spain refused to recognize the sale of Louisiana to the United States and claimed almost everything west of the Mississippi River. The United States wished to push that boundary as far west as it could, to the Rocky Mountains and, if possible, all the way to the Rio Grande in the Southwest and the Pacific Ocean in the Northwest. The boundary issue remained unsettled until the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, also known as the Transcontinental Treaty.

competition for control of North America—a contest that involved Spain, France, Britain, and the Netherlands. Spain did explore and establish claim to much of the western portion of North America but did not establish settlements on the Plains following Coronado's 1541 expedition or Don Juan de Oñate's expedition to present Kansas in 1601. Instead, the French, with their aggressive policies of expanding trade and influence with tribal Americans, became the first and most successful in winning alliances and

could be countered before they reached more economically important locales, such as Chihuahua.⁷ Following the removal of France from the competition for the Great Plains at the close of the French and Indian War, Spain acquired French Louisiana and worked to become the favored trad-

6. Nasatir, *Before Lewis and Clark*, 1:2, 17, 19, 50; Kenner, *A History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations*, 52-58.

7. Nuttall, "The American Threat to New Mexico," 12.

ing partner of those tribes with whom the French had held sway. Spain's major competition was Britain and, after 1783, the new United States, which soon developed great interest in the region west of the Mississippi Valley and in opening the Mississippi River to navigation for its citizens. The young and vigorous United States had time and ener-



François Hector, Baron de Carondelet, governor of Spanish Louisiana recognized the potential threat of the United States and warned his superiors in Madrid that efforts should be made to counteract U.S. trans-Mississippi interests.

gy on its side against the declining colonial, mercantilist empire of Spain.⁸

The potential threat of the United States concerned some Spanish officials. In November 1794 François Hector, Baron de Carondelet, governor of Spanish Louisiana, warned his superiors in Madrid that efforts should be made to counteract the trans-Mississippi interests of the United States, warning that, if they were not stopped, "in time they will demand the possession of the rich mines of the interior provinces of the very kingdom of Mexico." He

declared the United States was "advancing with an incredible rapidity." Carondelet recognized the importance of keeping the Indian tribes friendly to Spain and in opposition to the United States. He proposed "one hundred thousand pesos increase annually for the Indian department, for the purchase of arms, ammunition, and presents, which are necessary to employ the nations with efficacy." He also outlined a detailed plan to defend Louisiana against the United States.⁹

In 1794 Carondelet authorized the creation of a new company of merchants in St. Louis (commonly called the Missouri Company) under the leadership of Santiago (Jacques) Clamorgan, to expand trade with Indian tribes and explore the Missouri Valley to seek a passage to the Pacific (the same mission President Thomas Jefferson assigned to Lewis and Clark a decade later). Despite several attempts to find a passage to the Pacific, the company failed.¹⁰

The United States continued to pressure Spain to open the Mississippi River to navigation. Spain, feeling more vulnerable because of changes in the balance of power in Europe and facing possible war with Britain, agreed to the 1795 Treaty of Lorenzo el Real (also called the Treaty of Friendship, Boundaries, and Navigation but best known as Pinckney's Treaty) and granted concessions to the United States by opening the lower Mississippi to commerce.¹¹ The following year Governor Carondelet informed the Marquis de Branceforte at New Orleans that this treaty did not stop U.S. citizens from entering lands west of the Mississippi River.

Your Excellency will see himself obliged to take beforehand the most active measures to oppose the introduction of those restless people, who are a sort of determined bandits, armed with carbines, who frequently cross the Mississippi in numbers, with the intention of reconnoitering, of hunting, and if they like the country, of establishing themselves in the *Provincias Internas*, whose Indians they will arm to both further their fur trade and to make the Spaniards uneasy.¹²

A few years later, because of the French Revolution and Napoleon's desire to regain control of Louisiana, Spain re-

9. Carondelet quotation in James Alexander Robertson, ed., *Louisiana Under the Rule of Spain, France, and the United States, 1785–1807*, 2 vols. (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1911), 1:294, 298, 300, 301–45.

10. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 435–41.

11. *Ibid.*, 269–70.

12. Carondelet quotation in Nasatir, *Before Lewis and Clark*, 2:440.

8. See Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 255–67.

alized it could not defend Louisiana if Britain decided to take it. Consequently, in 1800 Spain returned Louisiana to France in an agreement kept secret for nearly two years. France agreed Louisiana could never be sold to a third party, only back to Spain.¹³

When Napoleon sold Louisiana to the United States in 1803, Spain refused to recognize the deal because it violated the terms by which the territory had been returned to France. Spanish officials also prepared to meet U.S. expansion into the disputed lands. President Jefferson, determined to explore the West in the face of Spain's objections, set the Lewis and Clark Expedition into motion prior to the Louisiana Purchase. Lieutenant Pike's Southwest Expedition would also be part of that effort, even though General James Wilkinson authorized it. Jefferson approved Pike's mission and praised its accomplishments. Spanish officials became fearful of intrusions, some even expecting an actual invasion, from the United States.¹⁴

Spain continued to value the Indian tribes in the contest for territory, and trading efforts continued. On May 18, 1804, Sebastián Calvo, Marquis de Casa Calvo, former military governor of Louisiana and later member of the Louisiana boundary commission, informed his superiors that "the Indians all have a decided preference in favor of our nation, from which we can derive advantages if we nurse with tenderness their hatred for the *Guachimangal* (American)."¹⁵ The United States also looked to the Indians for assistance. On May 14, 1804, Louisiana Governor William C. Claiborne directed this military commander at the Ouachitas Post in the territory:

It is expected that everything will be done by you to

13. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 442–44.

14. Donald Jackson, ed., *The Journals of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, with Letters and Related Documents*, 2 vols. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 2:300–1; Nuttall wrote: "From the time of the first French arrivals, foreign intrusions into New Mexico were opposed by the Spaniards. They were not only in violation of Spain's restrictive colonial policies but were looked upon as a threat to the province's security. This Spanish anxiety attained its apogee during the period under consideration [1804–1821]. Following the acquisition of Louisiana by the United States, Spain grew increasingly apprehensive of that expanding nation's designs on the land of her American empire. One of the principal manifestations of this phobia was the anticipation of an American invasion of New Mexico. The threat was illusory, but it was very much a reality to the Spaniards, and, as such, exerted considerable influence upon New Mexico in the ensuing years. Reaction to the American menace became, in fact, one of the salient features of the province's existence." See Nuttall, "The American Threat to New Mexico," v.

15. Calvo quotation in Robertson, *Louisiana Under Spain, France and the United States*, 2:192; see also Nasatir, *Before Lewis and Clark*, 1:108–13.

Indians, and that in their trade with the merchants, no injustice be done them. In your conversations with these Indians, you will speak of the friendly disposition of the President of the United States to his *red children*, and his great desire to see them happy. You will add that the Americans are now their brothers and they must live in peace and friendship, as one family.¹⁶

It should be emphasized again that the boundary of Louisiana remained undefined; in fact, neither France nor any other nation had ever designated the western limits of the territory. Thus a contest between Spain and the United States to determine that line encouraged exploration and development of better relations with Indians of the region. Spain claimed the Mississippi River as the boundary, while the United States pushed for the Rio Grande. As previously noted, Spain and the United States reached a compromise in 1819, but immediately following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 both sides sought to improve their respective claims to portions of the region. Both Melgares and Pike participated in that endeavor.

General James Wilkinson, head of the U.S. Army and also a paid agent for the Spanish government, sent a secret warning to Spanish officials in the late winter of 1804 about the Lewis and Clark Expedition and suggested how Spain could protect her claims from U.S. intrusions. He wrote, "an express ought immediately to be sent to the governor of Santa Fé, and another to the captain-general of Chihuahua [Chihuahua] in order that they may detach a sufficient body of chasseurs to intercept Captain Lewis and his party who are on the Missouri River, and force them to retire or take them prisoners." Wilkinson emphasized the importance of Spain "winning the affection" of various Indian tribes and "increasing their jealousy against the United States." By providing arms and ammunition to the Indians, Spain could employ them "not only in checking the extension of American settlements, but also, if necessary, in destroying every settlement located west of the Mississippi." Wilkinson also warned against U.S. incursions in Texas and New Mexico, suggesting that Spain insist that the Mississippi River be the boundary between Spain and the United States.¹⁷

Wilkinson declared,

16. Claiborne quotation in Robertson, *Louisiana Under Spain, France and the United States*, 2:192n.

17. Wilkinson quotation in *ibid.*, 2:337–42.

It is very probable that the United States will demand possession of one part of the right [west] bank of the Mississippi, in order to check the smuggling that will necessarily prevail if the above-mentioned side belonged to any other nation, and also to favor the collection of its revenues. The true policy of Spain requires obstinate resistance to such a demand by asking [for] the right bank of the Mississippi in its entirety.

He even recommended that Spanish troops be sent to destroy Daniel Boone's settlement on the Missouri River. In fact, all settlers from the United States located west of the Mississippi should be destroyed because, "if those settlers be allowed to advance, they will very quickly explore the right path which will lead them to the capital of Santa Fé."¹⁸ It is not clear if Wilkinson was just betraying Lewis and Clark, Jefferson, and the United States, or, as Warren Cook observed, "the possibility must not be overlooked that, rather than aiding Madrid, he may have been setting the stage for incidents that would provide an excuse to declare war and invade Spanish borderlands."¹⁹

Thus Spanish troops set out to intercept Lewis and Clark, and some of these arrived in present Kansas a few weeks ahead of Zebulon M. Pike's expedition in 1806. Lewis and Clark escaped all contact with Spanish troops, but Pike followed in their footsteps from the Pawnee village in present Nebraska to the point where the Spanish troops left the Arkansas River in present Colorado. Later Spanish troops and government officials took Pike into custody and detained him. General Wilkinson undoubtedly contributed to the search for and capture of U.S. explorers—in this case the very man he sent to find the sources of the Arkansas and Red Rivers and who attempted to open friendly relations with several tribes of Indians.

Initially, in January 1804, Calvo directed Spanish Governor Carlos Dehault Delassus at St. Louis to permit Lewis and Clark to proceed without opposition. "You will not put any obstacle to impede Capt. Merry Weather Lewis' entrance in the Missouri whenever he wishes," Calvo stated.²⁰ However, after hearing from General Wilkinson, Calvo sent an overland express to General Nemesio Salcedo, commandant of the Interior Provinces located in Chihuahua, with

Wilkinson's warnings and declared, "The only means which presents itself is to arrest Captain Merry Weather and his party, which cannot help but pass through the [Indian] nations neighboring New Mexico."²¹

General Salcedo received the message in early May and directed New Mexico Governor Fernando de Chacón to seek help from the Plains Indians in turning back Lewis and Clark and to send Spanish troops to arrest the Corps of Discovery. Governor Chacón was encouraged to solicit Pedro Vial for assistance because Vial had earlier traveled the region. Vial was a native of France who had performed several exploring expeditions on the northern frontier of New Spain, including opening a route between Santa Fe and San Antonio, another route between Santa Fe and Natchitoches, and a route across the Great Plains from Santa Fe to St. Louis and back.²² From 1804 to 1806 four expeditions left Santa Fe to try to find and arrest Lewis and Clark, without success. In February 1807 another expedition, this one successful, was sent to apprehend Pike and his party.

In August 1804 Pedro Vial, translator José Jarvet, and fifty men headed north from Santa Fe.²³ A month later, on the Platte River in present Nebraska, they met up with the Pawnees, who earlier had become trading partners with New Spain (perhaps in the early 1780s). The Spanish did not find Lewis and Clark, but they urged the Pawnees not to trade with the United States and to turn back anyone coming from there. Pawnee Chief Sharitarish (White Wolf), whom Pike would meet in 1806, welcomed the Spanish and encouraged the trade. A dozen Pawnees accompanied Vial and his party back to Santa Fe, where they arrived in early November.²⁴ Attempts to bind the Pawnees closer to Spain appeared to be succeeding.

In 1805 General Salcedo directed Santa Fe's new governor, Joaquín del Real Alencaster, to send troops to find "Captain Merry" or persuade the Indians to seek and capture Lewis and Clark. Alencaster, especially charged with seeking better relations with Indian tribes, particularly the Pawnees, to prevent U.S. intrusions, dispatched Vial, Jarvet, and fifty-two men to pursue those missions. Alen-

18. Ibid., 2:342–43, 345.

19. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 453–54.

20. Nasatir, *Before Lewis and Clark*, 2:725.

21. Ibid., 2:731; Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 455.

22. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 456–58; Noel M. Loomis and Abraham P. Nasatir, *Pedro Vial and the Roads to Santa Fe* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 262–87, 316–415.

23. Ruth Steinberg, "José Jarvet, Spanish Scout and Historical Enigma," *New Mexico Historical Review* 67 (July 1992): 232.

24. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 462–65.

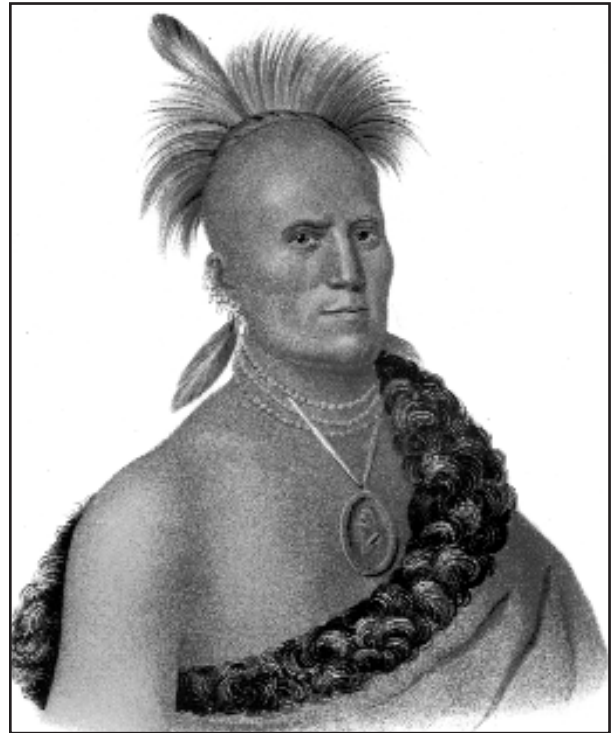
caster directed Jarvet and Vial to remain with the Pawnees through the coming winter and watch for Lewis and Clark as well as to cement relations with the tribes. Jarvet was to accompany the chiefs to Santa Fe in the spring while Vial remained to move closer to the Missouri River, seek information about Lewis and Clark, and arrest them if possible. Near the junction of the Purgatory and Arkansas Rivers, Indians (later confirmed to be Skidi Pawnees) attacked the party, which had been joined by others for a total of slightly more than one hundred men (including five recent migrants from the United States who were to proceed to Missouri as spies and later report to Santa Fe). The Spaniards lost most of their supplies, and one man was wounded. Unable to continue, the expedition returned to Santa Fe. Vial recommended the establishment of a fort on the Arkansas River.²⁵

Spanish officials believed the United States was winning influence with some of the Plains tribes and probably had encouraged those who attacked Vial's party. The Pawnees did not come to Santa Fe in the autumn of 1805 to trade, as they had in previous years, and this too the Spanish attributed to the growing U.S. influence. Another expedition from Santa Fe set out under leadership of Vial and Jarvet in April 1806, but within a month they returned because many of their troops had deserted. Vial was now discredited.²⁶

Then Spain perceived another threat from the United States. President Jefferson sent an expedition, planned by William Dunbar and led by Thomas Freeman and Captain Richard Sparks, with twenty-two men, to explore the Red River to its source. They carried a Spanish passport issued by Calvo, who insisted that some Spanish subjects accompany them, including a planted spy, Tomás Power. General Salcedo, however, notified Calvo that he would not honor the passport and would not permit the U.S. explorers to enter Spanish territory. Also, orders from Spain reached Salcedo in February 1806, urging him again to stop Lewis and Clark and turn back other attempts to intrude on Spanish territory. That same month U.S. troops took possession of the Spanish outpost at Los Adaes in Texas, only fourteen miles from Natchitoches in Louisiana. Spain viewed such U.S. aggression as almost an act of war.²⁷

Clearly, tensions were increasing between the two countries in the region where Zebulon M. Pike would soon venture.

Lieutenant Melgares led the fourth expedition, sent from New Mexico on June 15, 1806, to stop "Captain Merry." It was, according to one historian, "the



The Spanish urged the Pawnees not to trade with the United States and to turn back anyone coming from there. Pawnee Chief Sharitarish (above), whom Pike would meet in 1806, welcomed the Spanish but opposed

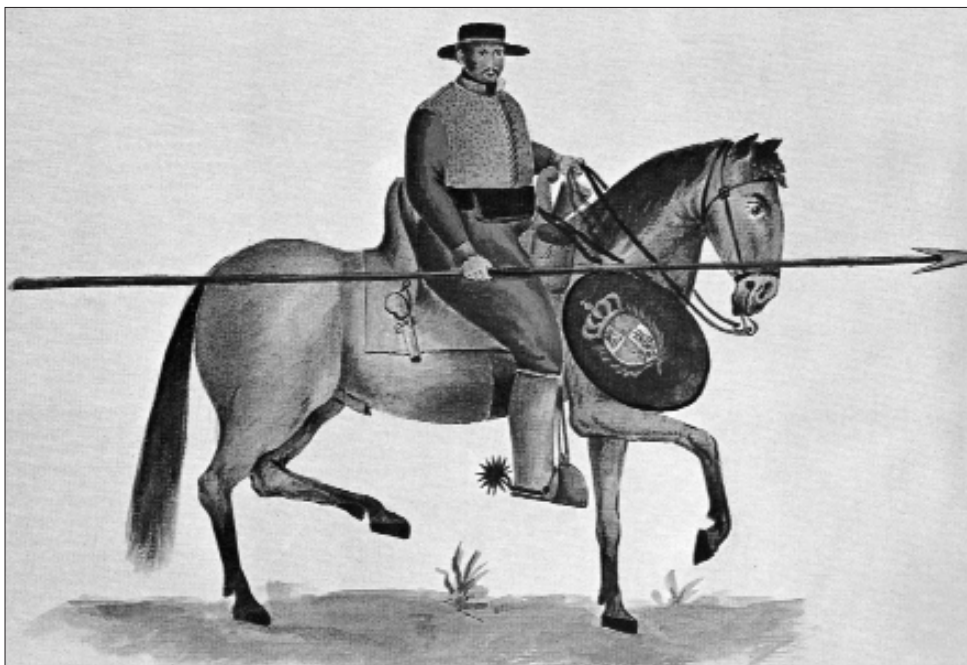
largest Spanish force ever sent onto the Great Plains." Melgares, with sixty additional soldiers, had been sent by General Salcedo from the presidio of San Fernando de Carrizal some seventy-five miles south of El Paso to Santa Fe, at Governor Alencaster's request, to help deal with the Indians who had stopped Vial and Jarvet from reaching the Plains. Melgares carried with him orders to turn back the Freeman-Sparks expedition on the Red River, if that had not already been accomplished by other troops from Texas, and then proceed northward to try to intercept Lewis and Clark and meet with several Plains tribes (particularly the Pawnee, Omaha, and Kansa) to seek closer ties with them

25. Ibid., 465–69.

26. Ibid., 470–72.

27. Ibid., 472–76.

and urge them to reject overtures from the United States. Melgares set out with 105 soldiers, 400 New Mexican militia, 100 Indian allies, and more than 2,000 horses and mules. The size of this force was designed especially to impress the Pawnees, whose loyalty to Spain seemed to be wavering, and secure their cooperation against U.S. citizens.²⁸



From 1804 to 1806 four Spanish expeditions left Santa Fe to try to intercept Lewis and Clark. The fourth expedition was led by Lieutenant Melgares. The above drawing depicts a fully equipped cavalryman of New Spain.

According to Pike, who later appended information about the Spanish expedition to his journal, Melgares came from an aristocratic family in Spain and was a career army officer who “had distinguished himself in several long expeditions against the Appaches and other Indian nations.” Pike noted, “he was a man of immense fortune, and generous in its disposal, almost to profusion; possessed a liberal education, high sense of honor, and a disposition formed for military enterprise.”²⁹ Born in 1775 in Villa Carabaca, Murcia, Spain, Melgares received an education and training as a military officer. Pike, who clearly admired him, came from a similar background (although not

wealthy), having been born in New Jersey in 1779 as son of a career army officer and himself a career officer. Pike mistakenly believed that Melgares had been sent out to search for him rather than for Lewis and Clark.³⁰

At Santa Fe the Spanish expedition received equipment and supplies for six months. The large force traveled down the Red River but did not meet up with the Freeman–Sparks expedition; it had been turned back by troops from Spanish Nacogdoches, led by garrison commander Francisco Viana, by order of General Salcedo. Melgares did meet some bands of Comanches, who were still aligned with Spain, and held council with them.³¹ Melgares then headed northeast when, according to Pike who disparaged the Spanish militia by stating, “it is extraordinary with what subordination they act,” approximately one-third of his force signed a petition requesting that they proceed no farther and go back home. Melgares reacted quickly and harshly, as Pike reported.

He halted immediately, and caused his dragoons to erect a gallows; then beat to arms. The troops fell in: he separated the *petitioners* from the others, then took the man who

had presented the petition, tied him up, and gave him 50 lashes, and threatened to put to death, on the gallows erected, any man who should dare to grumble. This effectually silenced them, and quelled the rising spirit of sedition.³²

30. Arthur Gomez, “Royalist in Transition: Facundo Melgares, the Last Spanish Governor of New Mexico, 1818–1822,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 68 (October 1993): 372; Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 479–80.

31. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 480; Jackson, *The Journals of Zebulon Pike*, 1:323–24.

32. Jackson, *The Journals of Zebulon Pike*, 2:57–58. It is interesting to note that Pike had a similar experience with one of his soldiers and reacted in a similar fashion. On January 24, 1807, while tramping through heavy snow in the mountains, Private John Brown began to complain. Pike noted, he “presumed to make use of language which was seditious and mutinous.” Pike let it pass until they were in camp that evening, when he reprimanded Brown: “it was the height of ingratitude in you, to

28. *Ibid.*, 477.

29. Jackson, *The Journals of Zebulon Pike*, 1:324.

When they reached the Arkansas River, Melgares left 240 of his men with many worn out horses in camp southwest of present Larned, Kansas. He took the remaining troops and proceeded to the Pawnee village on the Republican River southwest of present Guide Rock, Nebraska, where he met with leaders of the Republican and Grand Pawnees, "held councils with the two nations, and presented them the flags, medals, &c. which were destined for them." Pike saw those gifts when he later visited the same village. Melgares, Pike wrote, "did not proceed on to the execution of his mission with the Pawnee Mahaws and Kans, as he represented to me, from the poverty of their horses, and the discontent of his own men, but as I conceive, from the suspicion and discontent which began to arise between the Spaniards and the Indians." The Pawnees opposed Melgares's plans to proceed to the Missouri River, or so Chief Sharitarish (White Wolf) later told Pike. The Spanish troops returned to the Arkansas, picked up the remaining soldiers, and continued upstream until they left the river to return to Santa Fe, where they arrived on October 1, 1806.³³

They brought with them José Jarvet's ten-year-old, half-Pawnee son and two Frenchmen (Andrés Sulier and Henrique Visonot) they met at the Pawnee village. Jarvet's son was sent to live with his father, and the Frenchmen went on to meet General Salcedo in Chihuahua.³⁴ The Melgares expedition, as with the three previous attempts to find Lewis and Clark, had failed, as likely had his mission to the Indians. His experiences and observations, however, would prove valuable to Pike and his reports.

Warren Cook, who has written the best account of the Melgares expedition, offered a cogent evaluation: "The 'apprehension' of Captain Merry, one suspects, was at least one purpose of the huge Spanish force that advanced northward toward the Missouri but was hamstrung by horse thieves and stalemated by determined Pawnee op-

position." Governor "Alencaster also had wanted to 'awe the Plains Indians, and Melgares's force was well suited for that purpose." It was, however, "too unwieldy for a surprise attack on Lewis and Clark. . . . It was overkill, in the modern sense, and that proved a part of Melgares's undoing." According to Cook, "His force was too big to travel swiftly, live off the land, keep from offending Indian allies, and succeed in its hypothetical objective." Cook concluded, "With 240 of his men in one spot and 360 in another, his lines of supply were nonexistent, and it would have been difficult for him to push on to the Missouri, fend off the Pawnee, and remain there for a protracted time until Merry's problematical return. Vial's previous expeditions had not led him to expect Pawnee opposition."³⁵ How effective Melgares's appeal had been to the Pawnees would be tested a few weeks later by Lieutenant Pike.

The route and experiences of Pike's Southwest Expedition are covered elsewhere in this *Kansas History* issue, so only a few episodes are included here before looking more closely at the relationship between Pike and Melgares. Pike fulfilled his assignments regarding Indians with the return of the Osages to their village in western Missouri, arranging a meeting between Osages and Kansas that led to more peaceful relations between those two tribes, and visiting the Pawnees at their village on the Republican River. The Spanish and Anglo-Americans both courted the Pawnees, but the tribe made no firm commitments to either. Pike faced a tense situation when he requested that the Pawnees lower the Spanish flag recently presented them by Melgares and raise the flag of the United States, but Pike prevailed. Pike wisely told the Pawnees to keep the Spanish flag so they could hoist it if Spanish troops returned.³⁶

Chief Sharitarish (White Wolf) may have prevented Melgares from going farther east to the Missouri River, and he tried to prevent Pike from going farther west into the land of the Comanches, enemies of the Pawnees. Pike threatened to fight to the death if the Pawnees obstructed his party's advance, and he was permitted to push on, following Melgares's route to the Arkansas River. Indian guides assisted Pike from his outset in Missouri until he

let an expression escape which was indicative of discontent. . . . But your duty as a soldier called on your obedience to your officer, and a prohibition of such language, which for this time, I will pardon, but assure you, should it ever be repeated, by instant *death*, I will revenge your ingratitude and punish your disobedience." See *ibid* 1:372–73. Pike recorded no further disciplinary problems.

33. *Ibid.*, 1:325, 329.

34. Steinberg, "José Jarvet, Spanish Scout and Historical Enigma," 245–46; Loomis and Nasatir, *Pedro Vial and the Roads to Santa Fe*, 455.

35. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 482–83; Isaac Joslin Cox, "Opening the Santa Fe Trail," *Missouri Historical Review* 25 (October 1930): 52, wrote of Melgares: "His force was really too large for effective scouting and exploration. Mutiny in the ranks retarded his movements, which were still further hampered by the raids of Indians on his live stock."

36. Jackson, *The Journals of Zebulon Pike*, 1:328–29.

reached the Arkansas River. There, near present Great Bend, Kansas, on October 28, Lieutenant James Wilkinson, son of General Wilkinson who had authorized the expedition, took five soldiers and two Osages and attempted to navigate down the river to Arkansas Post in hastily built skin canoes. The trip proved very difficult. Pike and the remaining fifteen men, including interpreter Antoine François “Baronet” Vásquez (whom Pike called Baroney), Dr. John H. Robinson (a civilian who accompanied the expedition, perhaps at the request of General Wilkinson), and thirteen enlisted men, followed the Spanish trace up the Arkansas. Pike never met up with the Comanches as General Wilkinson specifically had ordered (although his journal mentions seeing many Comanche camp sites), but that may have been to Pike’s benefit since the Comanches were powerful, had ties to Spain, and were enemies of the Pawnees whom Pike had visited.

Pike’s mission changed as he marched farther up the Arkansas toward the mountains. His primary goal now became exploration, seeking the headwaters of the Arkansas and Red Rivers, both considered important in settling the boundaries of the Louisiana Purchase (in fact, these rivers established the boundaries in the 1819 Adams–Onís Treaty). This assignment seemed fairly easy, since the mouth of each river, where it entered the Mississippi, was well known. It mistakenly was assumed, as Pike and many other explorers were to learn, that both rivers’ headwaters would be found in the western mountains. It was not understood that the Red River does not rise in the Rocky Mountains (its sources are on the plains of Texas). An attempt to move from the source of the Arkansas south through the mountains would lead not to the Red River but to other Arkansas tributaries and, farther south and west, to the drainage of the Rio Grande to the Gulf of Mexico, not to the Mississippi.

Pike kept track of Melgares’s “Spanish trace” and could easily have followed it to Santa Fe had that been his goal. Actually, Pike carried a map, provided to him soon after he began the expedition, that showed a route from the Pawnee village to Santa Fe.³⁷ But Santa Fe was not his destination. Pike continued toward the Rocky Mountains, entering present Colorado on November 11, 1806, and took

time to attempt to climb the mountain he called Grand Peak (later named Pikes Peak in his honor), which he first sighted on November 15, noting it “appeared like a small blue cloud.”³⁸ From November 24 to 27 Pike and three companions tried, without success, to ascend the Grand Peak. They did, however, climb another mountain nearby.

The expedition pushed on. After much struggle in winter weather, Pike and his fourteen companions reached a point near the source of the Arkansas. In mid-December, while wandering around lost, they found the headwaters of the South Platte River. Their suffering intensified as snow accumulated, and they searched to the south for the source of the Red River. They believed they had found it when they arrived at the Rio Grande on January 30, 1807. On a tributary, the Conejos River, they built a small stockade during early February in which to survive the remainder of the winter. On February 7 Dr. Robinson departed for Santa Fe, where his arrival led to the dispatch of troops to bring in Pike and his few soldiers. On February 26 José Jarvet and Pedro Vial, in advance of a platoon of soldiers, made first contact with Pike at his stockade. They were immediately followed by fifty Spanish dragoons and fifty mounted militiamen, led by Lieutenant Ignatio Saltelo, who took the explorers to Santa Fe to meet Governor Alencaster.³⁹

Pike arrived in Santa Fe on March 2. After meetings with Governor Alencaster, Pike and seven of his party began their escorted journey to Chihuahua to meet with General Salcedo. Upon reaching Albuquerque on March 7, Pike rejoined Dr. Robinson, who recently had been placed under the charge of Lieutenant Melgares. Robinson informed Pike that Melgares had led the Spanish troops to the Pawnees and that Pike would find Melgares to be “a gentleman, a soldier and one of the most gallant men you ever knew.” The following day, March 8, they met with Melgares at the village of San Fernandez. Pike wrote, “he received me with the most manly frankness and the politeness of a man of the world.” He continued, “Malgares finding I did not feel myself at ease took every means in his power to banish my reserve, which made it impossible on my part not to endeavor to appear cheerful; we conversed

38. Jackson, *The Journals of Zebulon Pike*, 1:345.

39. See Pike’s journal in *ibid.*, 1:331–85, for details of the expedition from the Pawnee village to the arrival of the Spanish troops. The identity of Jarvet and Vial is provided by Steinberg, “José Jarvet, Spanish Scout and Historical Enigma,” 246.

37. Lowell M. Schake, *La Charrette: Village Gateway to the American West* (Lincoln: iUniverse, 2003), 23–25.

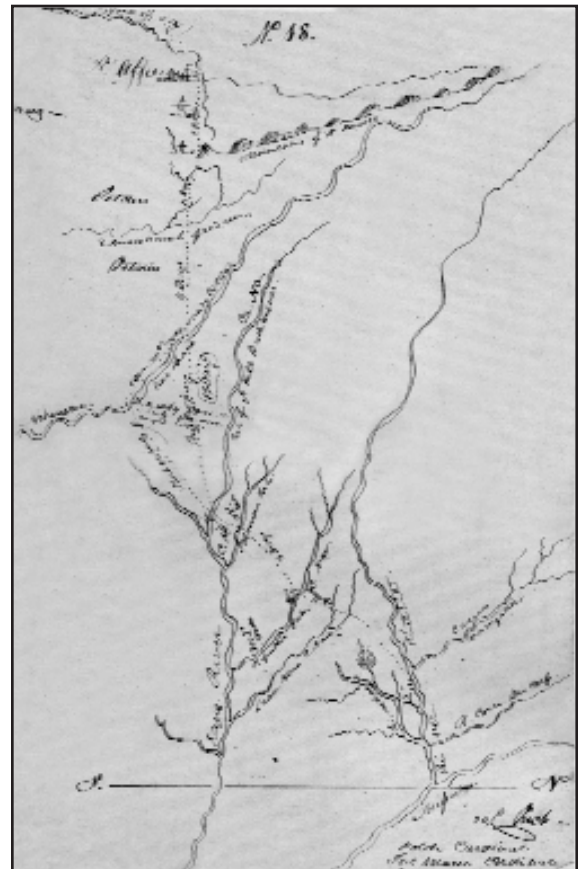
[in French] *as well as we could* and in two hours were as well acquainted as some people would be in the same number of months."⁴⁰

With admiration, Pike further described his new acquaintance. "Malgares possessing none of the haughty Castillian pride, but much of the urbanity of a Frenchman; and I will add my feeble testimony to his loyalty, by declaring that he was one of the few officers or citizens whom I found, who was loyal to their king." Pike was honored when Melgares told him his private possessions, including his papers, would not be confiscated or abused by him or his troops. That evening Lieutenant Melgares hosted a fandango for his new guest at San Fernandez.⁴¹

From March 9 to 21, on the road to El Paso del Norte, Pike rode daily in company with Melgares, visiting while they traveled and in camp each evening. After laying over a day at El Paso, the party, accompanied by an escort of dragoons, continued on to Chihuahua City, arriving there on April 2. Melgares introduced Pike to General Salcedo, who examined Pike's papers and confiscated some of them. While Pike remained a guest of the government in Chihuahua, until April 28, he and Melgares visited almost daily. Pike met the lieutenant's wife and her parents (her father, Alberto Maynez, was a captain in the army), visited with several government officials, and continued to gather information that was useful to his reports. Lieutenant Melgares also accompanied Pike when they left Chihuahua to cross Texas and return to the United States at Natchitoches in Louisiana. On May 6, at a point beyond Guajoquilla (now Jiménez) where Captain Mariano Varela replaced Lieutenant Melgares as commander of the party, Pike and Melgares parted. Pike wrote, "Our friend Malgares accompanied us a few miles, to whom we bad[e] an eternal adieu, if war does not bring us together in the field of battle opposed as the most deadly enemies, when our hearts acknowledge the greatest friendship."⁴²

The two enemies truly had become friends. At some point they had exchanged gifts, Pike presenting Melgares a shotgun. No record remains of what Pike received. Pike's party continued across Texas and arrived at Natchitoches on July 1, 1807, completing the Southwest Expedition.⁴³ His

journal of the expedition was first published in 1810, bringing information about the Great Plains and northern New Spain into public view. When published, Pike attached appendices that provided detailed reports about the route he traveled, brief summaries of the Indians of the Plains, and a lengthy record of New Spain.



Later identified as a "Santa Fe Trail" map, this sketch, probably drawn before Pike set out on his Southwest Expedition, was found in his possession when he was apprehended on the Conejos River.

His report on the Plains contained praise for the Arkansas River as a route of travel, with abundant game and only scattered Indian tribes to obstruct passage. He thought this route could become the best overland route to the Pacific Ocean. On the other hand, he compared the Great Plains to a desert, declaring "these vast plains of the western hemisphere, may become in time equally celebrated as the sandy deserts of Africa," which affected the history of Kansas. Pike said such topography might serve

40. Jackson, *The Journals of Zebulon Pike*, 1:404, 405.

41. *Ibid.*, 1:405–6.

42. *Ibid.*, 1:425.

43. *Ibid.*, 1:447.

“one great advantage to the United States, viz: The restriction of our population to some certain limits, and thereby a continuation of the union.” It also would “leave the prairies incapable of cultivation to the wandering and uncivilized aborigines of the country.”⁴⁴ When these views were reinforced later by the Stephen H. Long expedition of 1820–1821, which labeled a portion of the Plains the “Great American Desert,” Congress decided to move eastern tribes into present Kansas. The lands west of Missouri were not opened to settlement until the passage of the Kansas–Nebraska Act in 1854. For good or ill, Pike was partly responsible for that delay.

Pike’s appendix on New Spain was more detailed and, in the long run, more important than his record of the Plains. He included information about the geography, economy, government, population, society, and culture of the internal provinces, especially New Mexico, Biscay (Nueva Vizcaya, now the states of Chihuahua and Durango), and Coahuila. It seems clear that Pike’s writings about travel across the Plains to New Mexico, the economy of Northern Mexico, and the geography and culture of the region, came in large part from his conversations with Melgares, in addition to his own observations.

From Melgares Pike gained information about several Plains tribes, including those Pike never met, such as the Comanches. He learned much about the military organization of New Spain, and Melgares explained in some detail how he had engaged Indians in battle. They discussed their respective trips across the Plains, and Pike gathered geographical information from Melgares about places he, Pike, had not seen. In all it is impossible to determine how much of the information Pike presented in his journal and reports was enhanced by his numerous conversations with Melgares, but it appears to be considerable. Since Pike also had opportunities to visit with other army officers and government officials, even he may not have known how much of his report on New Spain came from Melgares.

Pike’s observations, plus information gleaned from Melgares, led Pike to point out in his publication of his journals and reports in 1810 that New Mexico was far removed from the source of supplies coming up El Camino Real from Mexico City. His descriptions of a trip across the Plains made it clear to enterprising tradesmen

in the United States how close they were to northern New Spain and that profits could be made by taking commodities to New Mexico. Some were willing to risk arrest and confiscation of merchandise, part of Spanish policy to prevent outsiders from trading with the empire. The following portion of Pike’s report in 1810 inspired merchants to attempt to open trade between the United States and northern New Spain, especially after the war for Mexico’s independence began under Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla in 1810, a revolution that, incidentally, Melgares helped crush the following year as part of the royalist army.⁴⁵

Pike wrote in 1810:

New Mexico carries on a trade direct with Mexico through Biscay, also with Senora and Sinaloa: it sends out about 30,000 sheep annually, tobacco, dressed deer and cabrie [pronghorn] skins, some fur, buffalo robes, salt, and wrought copper vessels of superior quality. It receives in return, from Biscay and Mexico, dry goods, confectionary, arms, iron, steel, ammunition, and some choice European wines and liquors, and from Senora and Sinaloa, gold, silver, and cheese. The following articles sell as stated (in this province), which will shew the cheapness of provisions and the extreme dearness of imported goods:

Flour sells, per hundred at	2 dollars
Salt, per mule-load	5
Sheep, each	1
Beeves, each	5
Wine del Passo, per barrel	15
Horses, each	11
Mules, each	30
Superfine cloths, per yard	25
Fine cloths, per yard	20
Linen, per yard	4
and all other dry goods in proportion.	

The journey with loaded mules from Santa Fe to Mexico, and returning to Santa Fe, takes five months.⁴⁶

The above excerpt undoubtedly was read or known by every trader who set out from the United States to New Mexico, beginning with the Robert McKnight and James

44. Ibid., 2:25, 27, 28.

45. Gomez, “Royalist in Transition,” 378–79.

46. Jackson, *The Journals of Zebulon Pike*, 2:50–51.

Baird party in 1812 through William Becknell's successful trading venture in 1821, and including the fur-trade ventures of Auguste P. Chouteau and Jules de Mun in 1815–1816 and again in 1817 when they were arrested by Spanish troops.⁴⁷ Two years later, it should be noted, Luis de Mun (brother of Jules and an officer in the U.S. Army) wrote a detailed report on New Mexico, relying primarily on Pike's publication with additional information from his brother. He described three possible routes through New Mexico's mountains, including one through San Miguel del Vado and Glorieta Pass, which later became the route of the Santa Fe Trail.⁴⁸ David Meriwether reached Santa Fe in 1819. A trading venture led by Thomas James and John McKnight reached Santa Fe a few weeks after Becknell in 1821. The fur-trapping expedition of Hugh Glenn and Jacob Fowler followed the Arkansas into present Colorado in 1821, and Glenn entered New Mexico early in 1822. News traveled fast that Mexico was independent and traders were welcome.


It is safe to conclude that everyone who traveled across the Plains to the Southwest, including future explorers such as Stephen Long, knew of Pike's expedition, whether from reading the reports, talking with those who had, or conversing with soldiers who accompanied Pike on that expedition. Pike, with the help of Melgares and others in New Spain, provided the solid information that stimulated attempts to open trade, which became successful when Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821 and removed restrictions on foreign trade. When Becknell's small party arrived in New Mexico in 1821 with a pack train of trade items, they were welcomed at Santa Fe by Governor Facundo Melgares, who respected Americans, in part because of his friendship with Pike. Becknell quickly sold his commodities at great profit and returned to Missouri where he outfitted the first wagons for a trading trip to Santa Fe in 1822. Many others followed.

The Pike expedition of 1806–1807, the Melgares expedition that preceded it, and Pike's published reports of both helped point the way to the Santa Fe trade. Eventually the many actions set in motion by the two expeditions and Pike's published accounts resulted in the annexation

of Texas in 1845 and the war with Mexico in 1846–1848. The entire Southwest, more than half of Mexico, was now part of the United States. President Jefferson and General Wilkinson could never have dreamed that Pike's Southwest Expedition would bear such fruit for a growing na-



Pike's observations, plus information gleaned from Melgares, inspired enterprising merchants to attempt to open trade between the United States and New Spain. Among them was French fur trader Auguste Chouteau (above), who was arrested by Spanish troops in 1817.

tion. Wilkinson considered the expedition a failure because Pike had not met with the Comanches nor found the source of the Red River. Still today, unfortunately, Zebulon Montgomery Pike does not receive the recognition he deserves (being known primarily for a mountain that bears his name), and very few people have ever heard of Facundo Melgares, two enemies who became friends and altered the course of history of North America. 

47. Frank B. Golley, "James Baird, Early Santa Fe Trader," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society* 15 (April 1959): 179, states that the 1812 party used Pike's publication "as their guide book."

48. Loomis and Nasatir, *Pedro Vial and the Roads to Santa Fe*, 257.